

THE POLYNESIAN.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY, AT HONOLULU, OAHU, SANDWICH ISLANDS.

J. JARVES, Editor.

SATURDAY, MAY 22, 1841.

Vol. 1.—No. 50.

SELECTED.

OLD IRONSIDES IN A QUANDARY.

Evening was slowly wrapping in her sky mantle the Fortress Rock of Gibraltar, as the frigate Constitution, under full sail, glided around Europa Point and rounded her yards for the Balearic Isles. It was the 12th of September, 1835, the breeze was favorable, and the harvest moon rode up the azure sky in matchless splendor. The breeze gradually freshened as the night passed on, until at last it became necessary to reduce sail, not only to save spars, but to prevent the possibility of running over the little island of Alboran, which is situated mid-way between the shores of Spain and Barbary.

At midnight by the master's reckoning, the old ship was near the almost sunken wreck, and a sharp look-out was kept by the watch for breakers on the lee bow. Silence reigned throughout the ship, the sails that remained upon her, drew sweetly, the billows curled in gentle murmurs round her bows, and passed off in a foamy sheet behind.

"Sail O!" cried a voice from the fore-castle.

"Where away?" thundered the officer on the deck.

"Dead ahead," was the reply.

"How does she steer?" cried the officer.

"For our bows, sir," answered the fore-castleman, and all was silent—we were directly under the moon, and from the course the stranger still pursued, it was apparent we were not perceived. As we were the largest ship and a man-of-war, and had starboard tacks aboard, it was proper for us to hold on our course, and for the stranger to give way, but this the brig, for such she was now perceived to be, had no idea of doing. At length she saw us, but still onward she came, as though desirous to go down to the caves of the sea as quickly as possible. A knot of officers gathered upon the fore-castle—and the writer of this sketch, seated beside of a belaying pin was watching the end of the eccentric stranger. She now seemed at a short distance from us. To give way to her might throw us upon Alboran; to pursue our course without a change upon her part, would effect her destruction. Both vessels were now charmingly near, and fearing lest I might be too small an object to be respected in case of a meeting between two such large bodies, going ahead at the rate of nine knots an hour, I made a sudden spring without duly considering my friend, the belaying pin, and landed upon the deck, leaving a quarter of a yard of blue broad-cloth, which I could have better spared from a better place, fluttering in the breeze.

At this moment, when it seemed that a meeting could not be avoided, if we kept on our course, the officer on the deck, thinking the brig intended to pass to leeward, gave the order—"Hard up your helm;" the stranger, however, continued on, and of course, approached still nearer to us, and just as I had made up my mind to hear the crashing of spars and rigging, the shrieks of the drowning and the gurgling sound of the whirlpool, as the gallant brig went down to her watery rest, the master's mate of the fore-castle cried—"Hard down sir," "Hard down," said

the lieutenant of the watch, in a voice of thunder—"Hard down," growled the old buizer at the wheel, and hard down went our helm. The old frigate answered her helm sweetly, and the brig, like a flash of light, dashed across our bows within a few feet of our flying jib-boom, and staggered along her course, we having as she passed us, completely stolen her wind. When she came on, not a voice was heard, but that of the officers of the watch, giving the orders before mentioned; but when she had passed, a burst of feeling came from every breast, and the cry, "thank God she is safe," awoke the silence of the frigate's deck. As I looked out of the bridge port, I saw the captain of the brig standing at the gangway, with a lantern in his hand, while beside him a little boy was kneeling in the act of supplication. Who the captain was, or from what nation he sprang, I never could ascertain; but one of our reefers, from the starboard cat-head, gave him a parting homily, like that of Commodore Truncheon's, well spiced with round grape and canister, which owing to the circumstances of the case, he never will forget. In a few minutes, the moon went behind a cloud, and feeling confident that we had passed the bugbear island, we shaped our course for Cape de Gatta. The next morning not a sail was in sight, the coast of Spain, in all its glorious beauty, lay beside us; Cape de Gatta appeared ahead; and the snow capped mountains of Granada towered amid the clouds.—Gentleman's Magazine.

COFFEE.

Coffee is the product of an evergreen shrub which is extensively cultivated in almost all hot climates.

This shrub (*Coffea Arabica*) grows ordinarily to the height of 15 feet. It bears beautiful sweet-scented flowers—elegantly white, which hang in clusters at the base of the leaf, which is soft, deep green, long and narrow. The berry is dark red, and resembles very much those of the *prunus cerasus*.

In Arabia, where the greatest attention is paid to the cultivation of coffee, the trees are generally raised in nurseries and then transplanted to some spot where they can be conveniently watered by streams from a hill side or elsewhere. When the berries are ripe they are shook off into cloths spread for the purpose. They are then dried on mats in the sun, afterwards the husk is taken off and they are again dried and prepared for use.

How long coffee had been in vogue with the Eastern people before its introduction into Europe, is not known, although Aljeziri Albambali, an elegant Arabic writer, affirms that a famous sheikh, introduced it about 870 of the Hegira: it at least became so much in favor with the Arabians, that coffee houses and booths increased to an alarming extent; the government fearing that they induced idleness and vitiated tastes, several times interfered to suppress them. But the best producers of the luxury valued it too highly to yield it easily, and they chose to give the reins to the wild steed that would bear them far away into the deserts, with their utensils for making the loved beverage, rather than live in high places without it.

It once became a serious question a-

mong the Mahomedans, whether coffee was not included in the intoxicating beverage prohibited by the Koran; but Aljeziri, of whom I have before spoken, proved that it was not included in the prohibited articles of drink, in an ably written pamphlet entitled the Support of Innocence, which is now to be found in the King's Library at Paris.

When coffee was first used in Egypt, it was drank twice a week, in companies assembled for the purpose, with a great deal of solemnity.

Among the Greeks and Romans, coffee was not at all known, or at least was never used.

A minute account of the introduction of coffee into Europe, and the various opinions concerning its beneficial or injurious effects upon the physical and moral condition of man, would be exceedingly interesting; but my object was only to make a few brief sketches for the general reader.

In the early part of the 17th century, coffee was drank at Constantinople. In 1615, Pietro dela Valle in writing from the above place, informs his friend at Rome that he should teach Europe in what manner the Turks drank cahue: and Purchas, writing about the same time, penned this:—"they drank coffee as hot as they can endure it; it is as black as soot, and tastes not much unlike it, good they say for digestion and mirth."

For men and christians to turn Turks, and think

To excuse the crime, because 'tis in their drink!

Pure English apes! ye may, for aught I know,

Would it but mode—learn to eat spiders too.

Such in 1663 was the spirit of many satirical poems which appeared in England against the use of coffee. The press and pulpit heaped the bitterest invectives and severest censures upon the heads of those who used the beverage, which was commonly termed the 'syrup of soot and essence of old shoes.'

'They drink,' said an eminent divine, 'a poison which God made black, that it might bear the devil's color.' In the women's petition in 1664, they urged as a complaint, that coffee 'made men as unfruitful as the deserts whence that unhappy berry is said to be brought; that the offspring of our mighty ancestors would dwindle into a succession of apes and pigmies: and on a domestic message, a husband would stop on the way to drink a couple of cups of coffee.' But the more there was said against the drink, the more the people drank it, which was much in keeping with the spirit of the times; regarding the hair, for instance, as the sermons lengthened against the undignified and unchristian usage of wearing it long, the hair lengthened in proportion, till it reached its most luxuriant and graceful flow. But the use of coffee, unlike the hair, has seldom been cut short: and one nation now consumes annually about 11,000,000lbs.

Coffee was introduced into England by a Greek merchant, who advertised it as follows,—"The virtue of the coffee-drink, first publicly made and sold in England, by Pasqua Rosce, in St. Michael's Alley, Cornhill, at the sign of his own head."

Coffee shops soon became numerous,

and were places of resort for the artist, the literary man, the politician. At one time Charles II. fearing that too many political factions had their origin in them, ordered them to be closed. The proclamation ran thus:—"The retailing of coffee and tea might be an innocent trade; but it was said to nourish sedition, spread lies, and scandalize great men; it might also be a common nuisance."

The French were not so forward in adopting the use of this "syrup of soot;" but in 1663, when the Turkish Ambassador served coffee, with a magnificent taste, presenting in elegant porcelain cups, in gold stands, on silver waiters, by the hands of richly dressed kneeling slaves, the heads and hearts of the Parisian dames were quite captivated, and the article soon became fashionable with these lovers of all elegance; in fact, in 1672, the most splendid coffee houses in the world were opened at Paris, and were resorted to by all the wits and geniuses of the day. In one might be found Rousseau, Dauchet, Saurin, Boindin, and other eminent men of that time. Coffee houses became an important link in the social system, and the manners, habits, condition and politics of the people, could there be studied.

MERLINO COCCATO.

THE EDIBLE BIRDS NESTS OF CHINA. Not only in their ordinary form, or acted upon by the culinary art, are the mosses employed as food; but one of the most admired luxuries of the table in China is the edible bird's nest formed from them. A small swallow, called, from his peculiar instinct in building this sort of habitation, *hirundo esculenta*, makes his nest from several of these species; and amongst others, it is said from the Ceylon moss, in the highest and most inaccessible rocks, in deep, damp caves. Crauford tells us, that none but those accustomed from childhood to the dangers it offers, can pursue the occupation of collecting these nests, for they are only approachable by a perpendicular descent of many hundred feet, by ladders of bamboo and rattan, over a sea rolling violently against the rocks. When the mouth of the cave is attained, the perilous task of taking the nests must be performed by torch-light, by penetrating into the recesses of the rocks, where the slightest slip would instantly be fatal to the adventurers, who can see nothing below them but the turbulent surf making its way into the chasms of the rocks. The high price given for these delicacies, is, however, a sufficient inducement for the gatherers to follow "this dreadful trade." The nests are formed of a mucilaginous substance; they resemble ill concocted fibrous isinglass, and are described as of a white color, inclining to red; their thickness little more than that of a silver spoon, and the weight from a quarter to half an ounce. When dry, they are brittle and wrinkled, the size nearly that of a goose's egg. The qualities of the nest vary according to the situation and extent of the caves in which they are found, and the time at which they are taken. If procured before the eggs have been laid, the nests are of the best kind. If they contain eggs only, they are still valuable. But if the young are in the nest, or have just left it, they are nearly worthless; being dark-colored, streaked with blood, and intermixed with